

Cap. 4

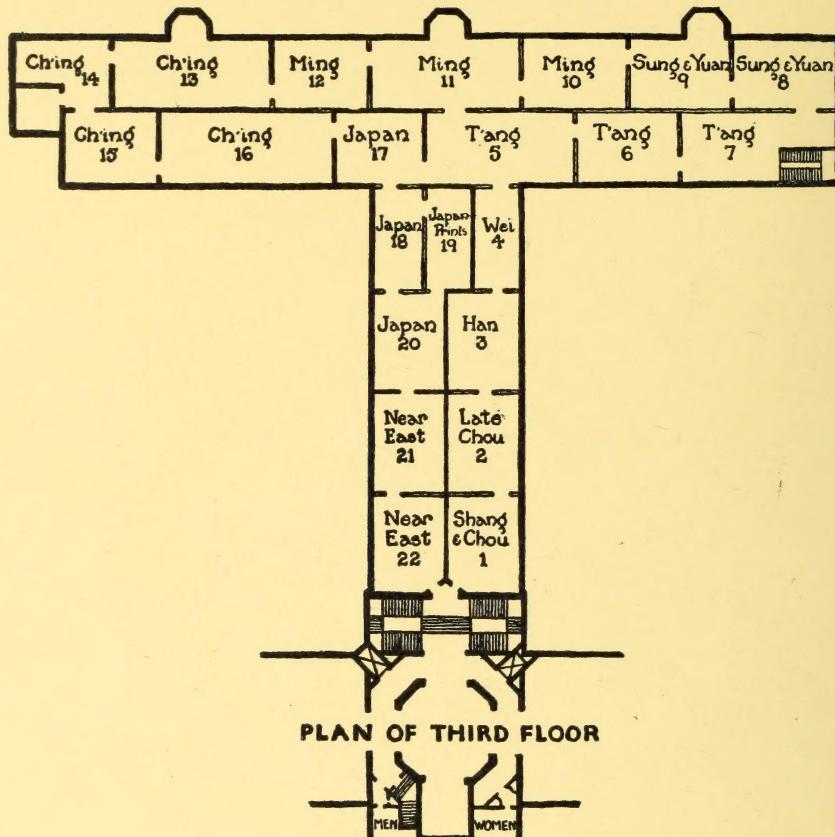
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM  
EAST ASIAN DEPT.

# CHINESE TEMPLE FRESCO No. I



BULLETIN OF  
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM  
OF ARCHAEOLOGY

## EAST ASIATIC DEPARTMENT (CHINA, JAPAN, INDIA)



### CHINESE COLLECTION

MAIN PERIODS - GALLERIES	
Shang - 1766-1122 B.C.	1
Chou - 1122-255 B.C.	1 & 2
Ch'in - 255-206 B.C.	2 & 3
Han - 206 B.C.-AD. 221	3
Wei (and Six Dynasties)      AD. 221-589	4

MAIN PERIODS - GALLERIES	
T'ang (and Sui)	5, 6 & 7
AD. 589-960	
Sung - AD. 960-1280	8 & 9
Yuan (Mongol) 1280-1368.	8 & 9
Ming - AD. 1368-1644.	10, 11 & 12
Ch'ing (Manchu) 1644-1912.	13-16

### ADDITIONAL ON MAIN FLOOR

1. Chinese Tomb.
2. Chinese Synoptic Exhibit.

BULLETIN OF  
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM  
OF ARCHAEOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, JULY, 1937

No. 12



Buddha Maitreya

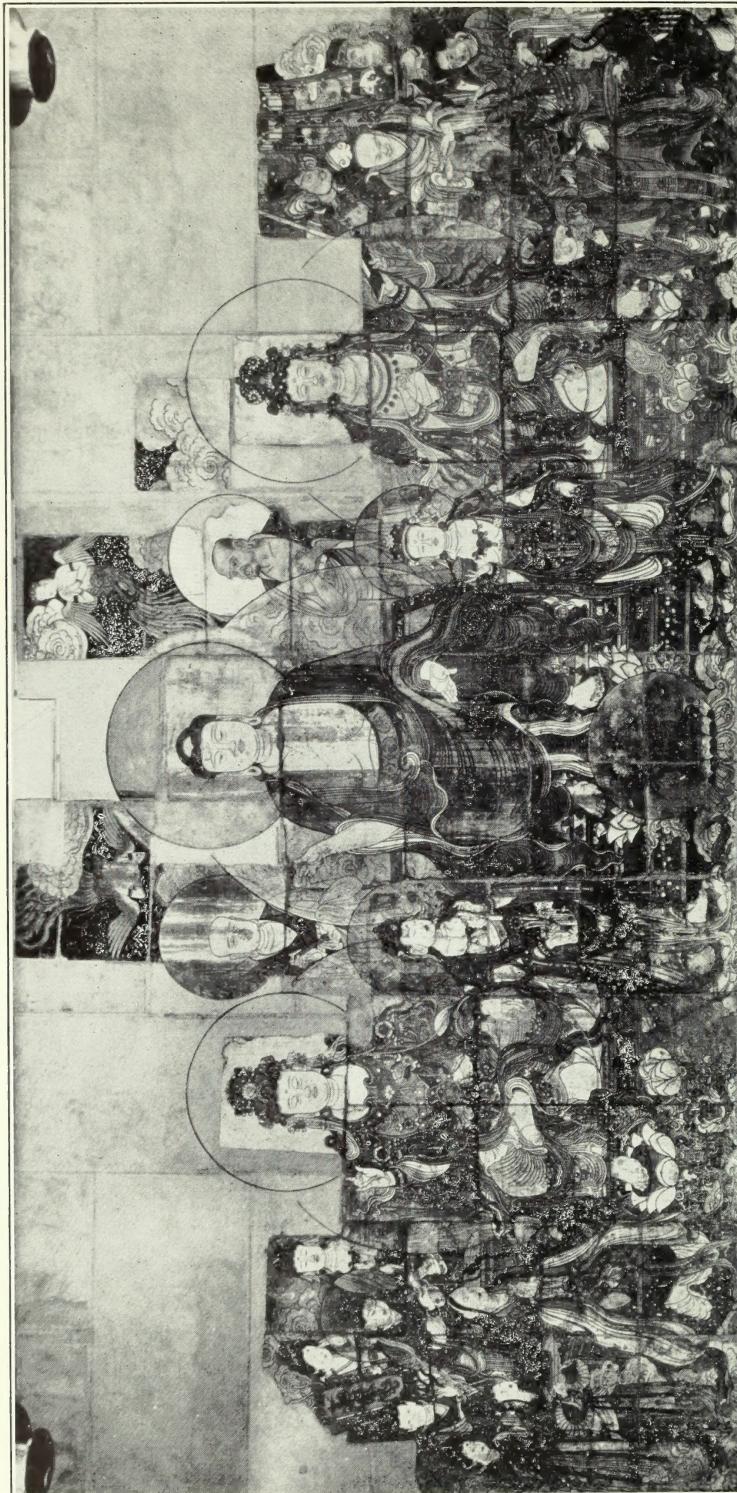
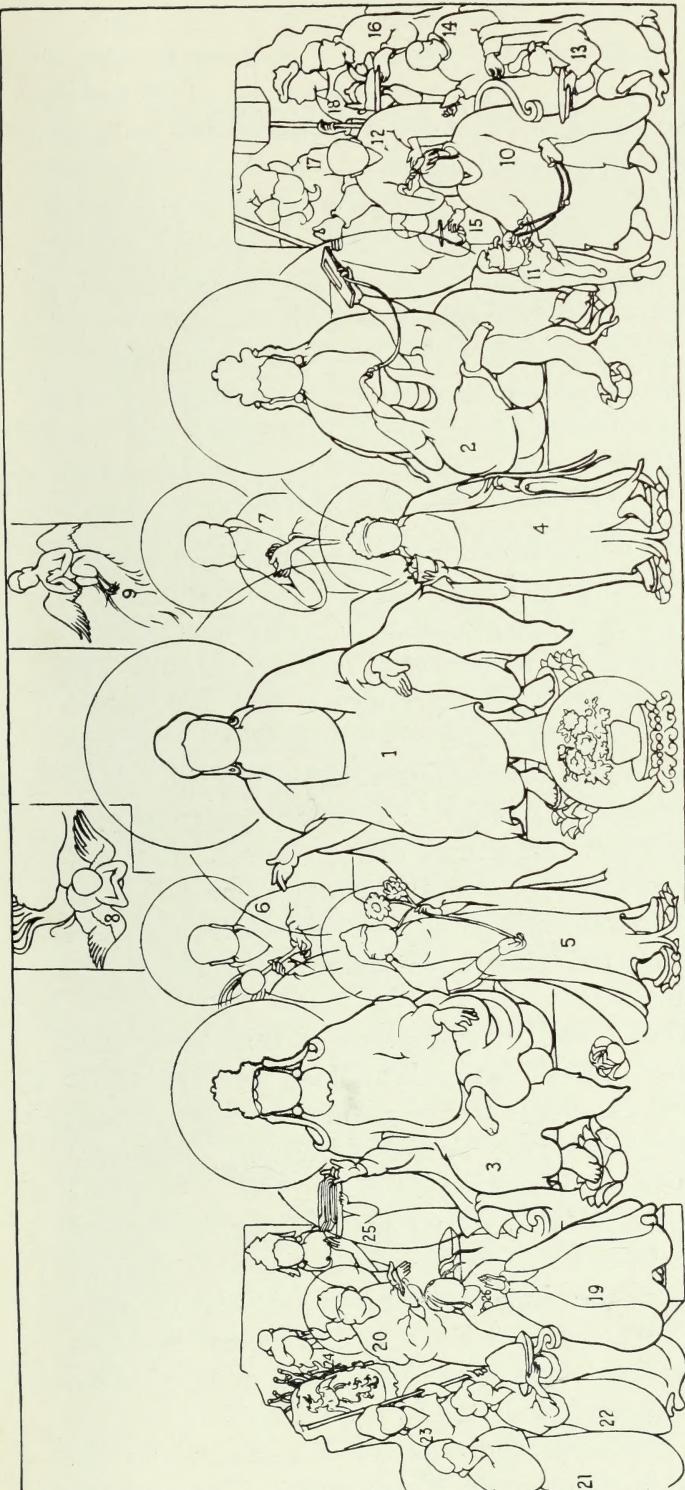


FIG. 1.—Chinese Temple Wall Fresco; 13th century. Hsing-Hua Monastery, Shansi.  
Theme: The Paradise of Maitreya; with two royal tonsure scenes.



### LEFT HAND GROUP

19 Empress Hu of the Wei Dynasty - Early 6th Century  
 20 Celestial Being acting as Barber  
 21 Attendant  
 22 Attendant holding Empress' head-dress  
 23 Attendant carrying Phoenix banner  
 24 Attendant carrying Coral tree and Rosary  
 25 Attendant holding folded towels  
 26 Apsara, cherub in folds of Empress' robe

### CENTRAL GROUP

1 Buddha - probably Maitreya, The coming Buddha  
 2 Bodhisattva, probably Mañjuśī (Wén-Shū), Lord of Wisdom  
 3 Bodhisattva, probably Avalokiteśvara (Kuan-Yin), Lord of Mercy  
 4 Celestial Attendant to Number 2  
 5 Celestial Attendant to Number 3  
 6 Monkish Disciple - Genius of Good  
 7 Monkish Disciple - Genius of Evil  
 8 & 9 Apsaras - Buddhist Angels

### RIGHT HAND GROUP

10 Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty - Early 6th Century  
 11 Emperor's son, Prince; afterwards Emperor Chien Wen  
 12 A Barber Monk  
 13 Attendant holding platter for hair  
 14 Barber's Attendant  
 15 Attendant holding reliquary for hair  
 16 Attendant holding Emperor's head-dress  
 17 & 18 Mailed Guardians (Regent of the North and Regent of the South)

FIG. 2.—Key to Chinese Temple Fresco, No. 1.

# CHINESE TEMPLE FRESCO

## NUMBER ONE

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### I. TEMPLE FRESCOES IN CHINA

IT has been a custom in China to decorate interior walls of temples with fresco paintings in polychrome. The temple buildings of the Buddhist and Taoist religions usually formed part of monastic foundations, and were under the care of resident monks. The paintings were simply decorative backgrounds to the idols which were ranged along the walls on pedestals or platforms. In the Confucian temples, which did not contain idols but spirit-tablets and accessories for Confucian worship and sacrifice, paintings were less commonly used, and were seldom of artistic worth, their emphasis being wholly centred on some moral teaching of classical lore.

Inner walls of palaces were also decorated with paintings, and Chinese literature points to portraiture as a common theme for such walls from very early times.

Buddhist paintings were usually groupings of Buddhistic personages in what are called *Mandalas* or Paradises, or were depictions of legendary or historical episodes of a Buddhist significance. Taoist paintings naturally reflected Taoist philosophy, and were strongly mythological and astrological.

The art of drawing is said to have been invented in the time of the Yellow Emperor (c. 2700 B.C.), while the Book of History attributes colour painting to the time of the Emperor Shun (c. 2255 B.C.), whose younger sister Lei is alleged to have been the first painter. "Alas", cried a disgusted Chinese critic of later ages, "that this divine art should have been invented by a woman!"

One of the greatest fresco painters was Wu Tao-tzu, who lived in the 8th century, that is, the middle T'ang period. No authen-

ticated piece of Wu's painting is known to exist, but such may appear some day, for dated contemporary paintings have been found in Tun-huang by Sir Aurel Stein and others. There is no question but that Wu's influence was so great as to fix the style for fresco paintings from his time onward, and most of the early temple paintings that remain to-day are considered as in the style of Wu Tao-tzu. Moreover, the majority of these extant frescoes come from the region of southern Shansi and western Honan, which was the area dominated by Wu.

Roofs of Chinese buildings seldom rest on walls, but on wooden pillars and an inter-joined framework of timber; consequently the roofs are frequently completed before the walls are built. This means that inferior material and work may be used in the construction of the walls. The better temple buildings have walls of burnt clay brick, but many are of sun-dried clay brick, built up with mud mortar. After the wall is completed, the rough clay or brick of the interior surface is covered with a mud mortar bound with chopped-up straw, to the depth of about an inch. When this is dry a thin layer of pure lime mortar is spread over the surface, and the fresco is then painted on this smooth surface. It is not known whether in the early frescoes the pigments were mixed with water or water and lime, and applied to the wet lime plaster in the true *fresco* method, or whether the *secco* method was followed and the painting applied to the dry plaster; but probably it was the latter.

Whatever it was, the colours have retained a freshness remarkable after many centuries of exposure, for Chinese temples are draughty and unprotected from dust storms and atmospheric changes. Moreover, little attention is paid to adequate damp-coursing, so that dampness soaking up through the porous bricks or clay plays havoc on the lower part of the frescoes. Then, too, the temple halls were often used for schoolrooms, and the frescoes would suffer from the scribblings of school-boys, as well as of sight-seers, and the general wear and tear from such public uses. Scores of such names are found written on the temple frescoes of the Museum collection.

## II. THE BUDDHIST FRESCO OF HSING-HUA MONASTERY

This fresco, which is the large central painting in the Chinese Synoptic gallery on the ground floor of the Museum, is 38 feet  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, and 18 feet 11 inches high. Chinese temples invariably face south, with walled gable ends at the east and west, a verandah and latticed door partition along the whole of the south side, and a wall on the north side. The frescoed walls were the gable ends and the north side, and the idols were ranged along these three walls, the central part of the north wall being the place of highest importance. This fresco was presumably from one of the gable ends of the hall, and its companion from the other end is said to be in the National University at Peiping. Whether there was a fresco on the north wall is not known.

The Museum fresco is well preserved and practically complete, the only parts lacking being sky sections with cloud design, which, not being germane to the composition itself, were passed over by the persons responsible for removing the painting from its setting. Unfortunately, one of the portions of plaster left on the wall is said to have contained an inscription giving the year date equivalent to A.D. 1238.

The Hsing-Hua Ssü, that is the Monastery of Joyful Transformation or Conversion, is situated ten miles (30 *li*) south-east of the county-town of Chi-shan in south Shansi (Lat.  $35^{\circ} 35'$ , Long.  $111^{\circ} 01'$ ). It is situated in the Chi Shan, the mountain range which forms part of the southern watershed of the Fen River, on which the county-town of Chi-shan is situated. In the *Chi Shan Hsien Chih*, the official gazetteer of Chi-shan county, the location of the Hsing-Hua Monastery is recorded, and the date of building is given as the 12th year of the K'ai Huang period of the Sui Dynasty, that is A.D. 592.

In the summer of 1926, Professor Li Chi-chih of Ts'ing-Hua University visited the Monastery, and he discovered an inscription on a remaining fragment of fresco plaster, which gave the date A.D. 1238, that is the *wu hsü* year of Ogodai, the son of Ghengis Khan of the Mongol State. The Southern Sung Dynasty was still in control in the South in 1238, and was not eliminated until Kublai Khan,

the son of Tuli, who was Ghengis Khan's youngest son, actually dominated the country and began the Yüan or Mongol Dynasty under the reign title Chung T'ung, in the year 1260. According to the inscription found by Professor Li the fresco required about five months to paint, as the following free translation shows: "The time (of the beginning of the fresco) was the Mid-autumn Festival (about September 8th) of the *wu hsü* year (1238) of the Great Yüan State, and the work was completed on the 14th day of the First moon (early in February)."

Speaking of the Hsing-Hua Monastery frescoes, Dr. J. C. Ferguson says: "It is well-known that . . . Ghengis Khan employed a Nepalese workman whose Chinese name was A-ni-ko, who was an expert workman in the manufacture of images. Under the orders of the Emperor he instructed a Chinese pupil, Liu Yüan, who made a great reputation for himself as a painter of Buddhistic subjects and who rose to high official position. These frescoes of the Hsing-Hua Temple must have been produced under the direction of the school founded by Liu Yüan" (The China Journal, Vol. VI, No. 4, page 178).

The frescoes of the Hsing-Hua Ssü are mentioned as coming from two main temples designated as the Northern Temple (*Pei Tien*) and the Southern Temple (*Nan Tien*). The fresco in the Museum is from the Northern, while one in the National University, Peiping, is said to be from the Southern Temple.

Frescoes of the same general style have been obtained from various temples in the south Shansi area, but it is very probable that the influence of the Liu Yüan school (*chia*) of fresco painters was continued over a long period of time, for, though the general treatment is the same, there is considerable variation in technical workmanship and artistic standards.

From about the year 1920, one of the changes in the thought life of the *literati* took the form of opposition to religion, and this was particularly intensified during the few years preceding 1928 while Soviet advisers were dominating the political field in China. During this time Buddhist and Taoist temples and monasteries were confiscated by the authorities and turned into schools and libraries, museums and barracks, and public institutions of various kinds. It was no wonder that the monks and custodians of the temples, fearing the total loss of their property, should set about to realize on their assets wherever possible. This was the main reason for



FIG. 3.—Central Group: Buddha Maitreya.



## CENTRAL GROUP

- 1·Buddha - probably Maitreya, the coming Buddha
- 2·Bodhisattva·probably Mañjuśrī (Wēn-Shu), Lord of Wisdom
- 3·Bodhisattva·probably Avalokiteśvara (Kuan-Yin), Lord of Mercy
- 4·Celestial Attendant to Number 2
- 5·Celestial Attendant to Number 3
- 6·Monkish Disciple - Genius of Good
- 7·Monkish Disciple - Genius of Evil
- 8 & 9·Apsaras - Buddhist Angels

FIG. 4.—Key to the Paradise of Maitreya.

the removal of the frescoes from the temple walls, and their sale to willing purchasers, invariably Chinese antique dealers, who counted on disposing of them to European and American collectors. Most of the frescoes now in Western museums would have been destroyed if left in China, for the thousands of temples taken over by the authorities were, during that iconoclastic period, denuded of idols and frescoes and everything that bespoke religion.

A further compulsion to dispose of temple frescoes lay in the fact that for several years, from 1920 onward, the district of south Shansi had faced severe famine conditions, and the coffers of the monasteries were empty.

In 1923 a syndicate of seven Chinese dealers purchased the Hsing-Hua fresco from the custodians. The painted plaster was cut in sections of about two feet square, and these sections carefully pried from the wall. There were 63 sections in all, each about an inch or more in thickness, for the mud base had to be removed bodily. These slabs were stored in a nearby village, where they remained for over four years, as the disturbed condition of the country made it impossible to move them. Finally in 1928, with no prospect of recovering their full financial outlay, the dealers offered them to the Museum at a reasonable price, and ultimately they were brought to Canada.

Their transportation from the interior of China to the coast was a nightmare, and the young man in charge of this operation had wasted to a skeleton by the time the work was completed. The slabs were packed in some fifty cases, with cotton wool protecting the painted surfaces, and these were then conveyed on mule carts. It took over three weeks to cover the distance to the coast, for bandits and minor war-lords exacted their toll in transit, and civil war operations more than once threatened disaster to the caravan. Finally the port of Tientsin was reached, and there the Chinese Maritime Customs facilitated their shipment. At that time there were no government restrictions on purchase or export of such antiques, but the situation has changed, and it would now be impossible to obtain permission for their export.

After arrival in Canada the frescoes remained in their cases for some time until the best method of permanently setting up such crumbling material could be decided upon. Mr. George L. Stout of the Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, who had been

experimenting successfully in transferring plaster frescoes such as these, was appealed to for help, and coming to Toronto he directed the work of transfer, which was done by Mr. William Todd and his associates on the staff of the Museum.

The technique employed was to apply a protective film of vinyl-acetate to the pigmented surface, then carefully to pare off the inch or so of clay and lime on the opposite surface. This was done so thoroughly that the pigmented design was reached from this reverse face, as is seen from Fig. 12, which shows a photograph of the barber monk from the reverse, while Fig. 11 shows the barber from the obverse. This process incidentally revealed re-painting of certain parts. In the barber's face, for instance, the first painting (see Fig. 12) showed the barber looking not at the Emperor's head but straight forward, and since he holds a razor in his hand, the critic probably felt this was a dangerous thing to do, and had the eyes repainted and looking downwards on the work in hand.

After the background of clay was removed from the pigment, the latter was permeated with several applications of thinly diluted vinyl-acetate, then gauze or thin canvas was attached to the surface, and this layer was, under pressure, made to adhere to a slab of synthetic millboard. Afterwards these sections of millboard were matched, and screwed to a framework already arranged on the wall of the gallery. This work on the Museum fresco was done in 1933, and after tempering for two years or more the face of the painting was carefully cleaned, bringing it to its present condition.

The theme of the painting is purely Buddhist. It is in the form known as the *Mandala* or Paradise, in which a group of Buddhist divinities is symmetrically arranged and presided over by a central figure, usually a Buddha. In this fresco the central figure is the Maitreya Buddha, and so the central group may be called a "Paradise of Maitreya".

In addition there are depicted in this fresco two historical incidents, one on each side of the central group. They are both tonsure scenes, and have to do with royal personages, one the Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty, and the other the Empress Hu of the Wei Dynasty. They were contemporaneous at the beginning of the 6th century, and both were royal patrons of Buddhism, which is why they are depicted on this Buddhist fresco.



FIG. 5.—Central Group: Kuan-Yin, Lord of Mercy.



FIG. 6.—Central Group: Wen-Shu, Lord of Wisdom.

### III. DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS

#### A. CENTRAL GROUP: The Paradise of Maitreya

This central group is composed of nine figures, including Buddha seated in the centre with a Bodhisattva on either side, and six attendants of various grades. The three main figures have transparent body haloes and opaque head haloes. Along the bottom lotus flowers and leaves appear to emerge from the waves of water, while in the open spaces of the background are spiral forms of clouds, reaching up to the blue vault of heaven, where two winged celestial cherubs, the Buddhist Apsaras, hover in prayerful adoration.

It is a dignified and impressive group, perfect in balance, rich in colour, magnificent in line design, and breathing a spirit of peace and deep contentment. (*Figs. 3 and 4.*)

##### 1. *Buddha Maitreya: the Coming Buddha*

There are certain points that might suggest Buddha Sakyamuni, but the European posture of sitting compels us to assume that this is the Maitreya, even though the familiar symbols of Maitreya, the flask of ambrosia and the *mudrā* of teaching, are absent. Maitreya is sometimes depicted as a Bodhisattva, but in this case as a Buddha, even though his attainment of the Bodhi still belongs to the future, and this is in keeping with iconographic practice of Northern Buddhism.

He is sitting on a square dais in European fashion, with a lotus-flower under each foot, while beneath his feet is a transparent halo surrounding a bowl of peony flowers. The bowl is of a pottery form and of a style common to the Sung Dynasty. His right hand is extended in the pose known as the *vitarka-mudrā*—the *mudrā* of argument, while his left hand rests palm upwards on his left knee. His breast is bared, and his skin is of a golden colour, which is the seventeenth of the Thirty-two Signs of Greatness. Among other Signs of Greatness are the *ushnīsha*—the protuberance on the skull which is the seat of the intellectual faculties, and the *ūrnā*—the divine eye on the forehead which is the sign of spiritual insight. He is clothed in an outer robe of dark red, an under robe of bright

green, and his waist is encircled with what appears to be a rich, brilliantly coloured girdle, but which may be a brocaded border of a garment. (Fig. 3.)

This Buddha since the 13th century has been depicted in another form, as a fat, squat, laughing figure, which is known popularly as the Laughing Buddha, or Laughing Lohan.

## 2. *Bodhisattva: probably Mañjuśrī (Wēn-Shu), the Lord of Wisdom*

Bodhisattvas are of the third class of Buddhist saints who have to pass only once more through human life before reaching full Buddhahood. They forgo Buddhahood in order to save mortals, and are usually personifications of certain attributes, such as light, wisdom, mercy, power, and carry symbols illustrating these respective attributes.

This Bodhisattva, the Lord of Wisdom, seated on Buddha's left, is characteristically holding a book in his uplifted hand and his right hand holds the jewelled bead at the end of the ribbon which encircled the book. He is seated on a lotus throne, with left leg pendent and foot resting on a lotus support, while the right leg is folded upon the throne. He has the *ūrṇā* on his forehead, and the hair of beard and moustache is evident, though the figure is of female type. Besides the book, this Bodhisattva usually carries a sword, and is standing or seated on a lion. The two latter symbols are absent, but the close-petalled blue lotus-flower at his feet is often seen in paintings of *Mañjuśrī*. (Fig. 6.)

## 3. *Bodhisattva: probably Avalokitesvara (Kuan-Yin), the Lord of Mercy or Goddess of Mercy*

This Bodhisattva sits on Buddha's right, in a posture similar to that of the previous figure but with the right leg pendent.

The usual symbols of this deity in paintings are the rosary, the pink lotus, and the flask, though in the many-armed type various other symbols are in evidence. In this case the symbols are absent except possibly the lotus-flowers carried by the attendant (Figs. 5 and 7), and the small pink lotus below the throne.

The posture of the right hand is that of admonition usually peculiar to Bodhisattvas, and the left hand rests upon the left knee, palm downward. (Fig. 5.)



FIG. 7.—Celestial Attendant associated with Kuan-Yin, the Goddess of Mercy. The transparency of the gauze sashes and the delicacy of linear treatment are particularly attractive.

FIG. 8.—Celestial Attendant associated with Wen-Shu, the Lord of Wisdom. Though similar in general form to the opposite attendant, the detailed treatment of the latter seems to mark it as the handiwork of another artist.



4. *Celestial attendant of Bodhisattva type: probably associated with Wên-Shu, the Lord of Wisdom*

This figure is standing on lotus-flower supports and carries in the right hand a bowl containing three apples or peaches. Whether they refer to the peaches of immortality is undetermined. The bowl is of interest for it is not only of characteristic Sung shape but its colour is that of the typical bluish-purple Chün ware, and obviously the vessel is intended to be a Chün bowl. (Fig. 8.)

5. *Celestial attendant similar to the latter: probably associated with Kuan-Yin, the Goddess of Mercy*

This figure stands in a posture similar to the former, but carries two lotus-flowers in the left hand, the lower ends of the stems being supported by the right hand. A noticeable characteristic of this figure is that she is wearing streamers and sashes which are transparent, probably made of thin silk gauze. (Fig. 7.)

6 and 7. *Monkish disciples: the Genius of Good and the Genius of Evil, respectively*

For this interpretation there is evidence from the material found in the Tun-huang caves by Sir Aurel Stein, Professor P. Pelliot, and others, and expounded by the late M. Raphael Petrucci ("Ser-india", by Sir Aurel Stein, Vol. III, Appendix). (Figs. 3 and 4.)

8 and 9. *Apsaras, or celestial cherubs*

These are beneficent heavenly beings, sometimes of bird-like form, which fly or float among the clouds and are often depicted as dropping flowers from above on Buddhist figures or groups. Both these figures hold their hands in the posture of prayerful adoration. (Figs. 3 and 4.)

## B. RIGHT HAND GROUP: The Tonsuring of Emperor Wu

In this fresco two tonsure scenes are depicted, both concerning royal personages who were zealous Buddhists to the extent of taking monastic vows. The scene on the right of the fresco, that is on Buddha's left as the place of honour, has to do with Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty, known as Liang Wu Ti, who reigned from A.D. 502 to 550, when the Liang court was at Nanking. The other scene concerns the Empress Dowager Hu of the Northern Wei Dynasty, known as Pei Wei Hu Hou, from about A.D. 500 to 528, when the capital of the Wei State was at Loyang in western Honan.

It would appear to be more than a coincidence that these episodes of the conversion and dedication to Buddhism of these two rulers should be depicted in a "Monastery of Joyful Conversion", and the monastery itself may well have been founded to commemorate such important historical events, and if so the pictures might be even earlier than the date accepted, and the year 1238 be that of a restoration. It is well known that Emperor Wu in earlier years was an ardent Confucianist, promoting the study of the Classics and devoting large sums of money to building temples dedicated to the worship of Confucius and his disciples. Then, about 528, he became converted to Buddhism, and thereafter was just as zealous a promoter of that religion. Bodhidharma, the 28th Indian Patriarch, who became the First Patriarch of Chinese Buddhism, arrived at the court of Emperor Wu about 527 and it is probable that his visit to the Emperor was responsible for the latter's conversion. However, the visit was not immediately fruitful, and Bodhidharma, being dissatisfied at the Emperor remaining unenlightened, left Nanking and set out for Loyang, the capital of the Wei State, which then occupied the greater part of northern China, and where the Empress Dowager Hu was zealously propagating Buddhist teaching. The Emperor, regretting the loss of the great ascetic, sent a messenger to invite him to return. When the officer reached the bank of the Yang-tzu River, he beheld the monk crossing the swollen waters on a reed—a favourite subject of Buddhist art. Bodhidharma refused to return and proceeded to Loyang, where he took up his residence in the Shao-Lin Monastery of Sung Shan, sitting



FIG. 9.—Right Hand Group: The Tonsuring of Emperor Wu.



## RIGHT HAND GROUP

- 10. Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty. Early 6th Century
- 11. Emperor's son, Prince; afterwards Emperor Chien Wen
- 12. A Barber Monk
- 13. Attendant holding platter for hair
- 14. Barber's Attendant
- 15. Attendant holding reliquary for hair
- 16. Attendant holding Emperor's head-dress
- 17 & 18. Mailed Guardians: (17) Regent of the West or North (18) Regent of the South

FIG. 10.—Key to the Tonsuring of Emperor Wu.

for nine years in silent meditation facing a wall ("Dictionary of Chinese Mythology", by E. T. C. Werner).

Emperor Wu became so zealous a Buddhist that he determined to withdraw from his palace and enter a monastery. The picture depicts the Emperor, with his rosary of 108 beads in his hand, having his head shaved in preparation for his withdrawal. By his side stands his little son, rubbing his eyes. Attendants holding towels and other accessories surround him, and in the background are two military attendants, probably two of the four "Guardians of the Quarters".

The Emperor entered the T'ung-T'ai Monastery near Nanking, but he did not abdicate, and his rule of the country became so intermittent that chaos ensued and the country was beset with difficulties. His courtiers besought him to return to the court and resume the reins of government, but not until they had agreed to pay to the monastery a large ransom fee did he consent. This happened not once only but no less than three times, so that the dynasty was weakened, and seven years after his death in 550 it collapsed entirely.

It was during Liang Wu Ti's reign that Corean envoys came to court seeking copies of the Buddhist scriptures. As a Chinese historian said, "Of Buddhist Emperors there have been many, but in point of mad devotion Liang Wu Ti leads them all". (*Figs. 9 and 10.*)

#### 10. *Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty*

As stated above, the Emperor is here being tonsured preparatory to leaving the court at Nanking to enter the T'ung-T'ai Monastery. He is seated in a highly decorated chair with a circular back, his feet resting on a foot-stool. In his two hands he holds the Buddhist rosary (*nien chu*) of 108 beads, which is strikingly similar to the official beads (*ch'ao chu*) worn by Chinese officials down to recent times. His robes are brilliant in red and green colours, and a girdle of inlaid turquoise plaques encircles his waist.

11. The Emperor's son stands at his right knee, one hand clutching the sleeve of his father's robe, and the other rubbing his eyes, which are closed as if he were weeping. His head-dress and high-legged boots are colourful and striking. This little prince

in 550 succeeded to the throne as the Emperor Chien-Wen, but only held it for a year. Neglect of his kingly duties by Emperor Wu had so weakened the state that from 550 to 557 no less than five persons occupied the throne and then the dynasty collapsed and the state came under the Ch'en Dynasty.

#### 12. *A Barber Monk*

This barber is concentrating his attention on the work in hand, but when first painted his eyes were looking directly forward (*see Fig. 9*). He holds a typical Chinese razor, and his own head is tonsured. His clothing is that of a mendicant monk—a yellow robe with dark stripes or borders, covering garments of drab gray. For greater freedom of his right hand the upper yellow robe is thrown from his right shoulder and is draped simply over the left shoulder and arm. (*Figs. 11 and 12.*)

#### 13. *Attendant holding platter for hair*

Dressed in a green gown, with a peculiar ornament of four straps hanging from his girdle, this man is kneeling on his left knee and holding a platter. This platter is yellow, and of metal form, and probably was either of brass or gold. It contains no hair, and might well be the wash-basin. A similar platter in the tonsure scene of Empress Hu actually has strands of hair laid across it.

#### 14. *Barber's attendant*

He wears a short red jacket bordered in yellow and blue, and the lower half of his clothing is not apparent. He holds strands of the hair already cut in both hands, and a towel is thrown over his left arm. He is not tonsured. His head is uncovered and his hair is dressed in an unusual fashion.

#### 15. *Attendant holding reliquary for hair*

On an occasion of this kind it was usual to prepare a receptacle to contain the hair, and this vessel would be placed in the temple among the holy relics. This vessel, yellow in colour, was probably of brass or gold, and its shape and decorative design harmonize with Sung Dynasty standards. Little can be seen of the garments of this youthful attendant, though it is evident he wears a fur, and his hair is dressed similarly to the latter attendant.



FIG. 11.—Detail of Fig. 9: The Barber Monk.



FIG. 12.—Detail of Fig. 9: The Barber Monk from the Reverse. Note under-pigment painting of the eyes.

## 16. Attendant holding Emperor's head-dress

This individual is apparently the same type of servant as the attendant who holds the platter for the hair (No. 13). The head-dress is resting on a brass or gold platter, which the attendant holds in both hands.

## 17. Regent of the North

This military figure clothed in mail-armour and helmeted, is typical of the Four Guardians of the Quarters, known as Lokapalas and by the Chinese as *Ssü Ta T'ien Wang*—the Four Great Heavenly Kings. They are especially guardians of temples, but symbolize also the seasons, the four elements, and the four quarters of the universe. Each has a name, a colour, a symbol, and his respective powers and functions.

It is not quite clear whether this Guardian is Regent of the North or of the West. If it were a sword that he carried, he would be the Regent of the West and the God of Autumn. The white bar ascending by his head might well be the staff of a pike coming up in the crook of his right arm, so that his hands could be held in the peculiar manner shown with the thumbs together pointing upward. If so, this personage would be the Regent of the North and preside over the season of Winter. His symbols are a pike with banner, or a pearl and snake, and he sometimes carries in his hand a stupa or reliquary. The evidence is in favour of assuming this person to be Vaiśravana, the Regent of the North, especially as his companion is obviously the Regent of the South.

This same type of mail-armoured Guardian was found by Sir Aurel Stein on banners and frescoes from the Tun-huang caves belonging to the 8th century ("Serindia", by Sir Aurel Stein). The elaborate and impressive mail-armour will be described in following issues dealing with Temple Wall Frescoes, Nos. II and III.

## 18. Regent of the South

There is no question about this Guardian being Virūdhaka, who presides over Summer and the South, for he is holding the umbrella which is his symbol. He sometimes also carries a sword, and is in mail-armour and helmeted. His helmet is said to be made of the skin of an elephant's head, and the white helmet this particular

Guardian is wearing is of such a peculiar shape that it might well be the cured skin of the head of a pachyderm.

These two Regents of North and South are corollary to the two Regents of East and West which may be assumed to be among the attendants of Empress Hu in the corresponding tonsure scene on the left of the fresco.

### C. LEFT HAND GROUP: The Tonsuring of Empress Hu

At the beginning of the 6th century the Chinese Empire was divided between the Tartars in the North and the Chinese in the South. The Southern Dynasty was that of Liang, and Emperor Wu of the tonsure scene described above was the most prominent occupant of the throne. At the same time in the north there was the Northern Wei Dynasty. Several Emperors of Wei were ardent Buddhists, beginning with Hsien-Wen Ti in 466, who spared no expense to promote Buddhism; one image alone, constructed in 467, was forty-three feet high and required 14,000 pounds of brass and 1,000 pounds of gold. Moreover this Emperor, when only seventeen years old, abdicated in favour of his five-year-old son, Hsiao-Wen Ti, in order to devote his time to the study of Buddhism. It was the consort of Hsuan-Wu Ti, the son of Hsiao-Wen Ti, who did most for Buddhism in the Wei State. Emperor Hsuan-Wu reigned from 500 to 516, and during that time it was Empress Hu who extended Buddhism, so that when her son Hsiao-Ming Ti came to the throne in 516 there were 415 sets of the Buddhist Classics, 30,000 temples and pagodas, and more than 200,000 monks and nuns in the state. As Empress Dowager she continued this work, and set up in the confines of the court a convent of which she was abbess and many of the ladies of her court were nuns. Some histories do not deal kindly with the Empress and speak of her as a wicked trouble-maker, but much of such criticism may possibly be attributed to the rivalry of the Confucian scholars.

This left hand tonsure scene of the fresco has to do with the convent activities of the Empress Dowager Hu of the Northern Wei Dynasty. (*Figs. 13 and 14.*)

#### 19. *Empress Hu of the Wei Dynasty*

The Empress is seated on a throne with circular back similar to that of Emperor Wu. Her hands are in the attitude of prayerful devotion. The wide sleeves of her robes reach to the ground, and show a feather border decoration, with protective cuff-like folds over the tops of the sleeves which come in contact with the wrists.

The shoes of the Empress have turned-up points, each capped with a bird's head, probably a phoenix, which is the particular symbol of an Empress.

#### 20. *Celestial Being acting as Barber*

This female figure is of Bodhisattva type, with *ūrṇā* in her forehead, and the only person in the group with a halo. She is sharpening the razor on the palm of her hand, while in front of her is the platter with the strands of hair laid across it, which may have been used as a wash-basin.

#### 21. *Female attendant*

There is little to indicate the function of this attendant. Her upper robe, draped round the shoulders, is of dark blue colour, and her hands are hidden under its folds as if something were being carried there. In another fresco in the Museum a female figure, representing the Goddess of Spring, is carrying a covered guitar in just such a manner. If this figure should be carrying a covered guitar, then it may be assumed to be a female depiction of the Regent of the East, Dhritarāshtra, who presides over the Spring, and whose symbol is a guitar. This would make her a companion of the attendant carrying the coral-tree described below (No. 24), who may be the Regent of the West. In her coiffure the central ornament appears to be a comb, with hair-pins on either side. The *ūrṇā* in the forehead is probably a recent addition, and should not be there.

#### 22. *Attendant holding Empress's head-dress*

This presumably is a maid-in-waiting, for her own head-dress is in general similar to that of the Empress, which is set out on the brass or golden platter she bears.

#### 23. *Attendant carrying phoenix banner*

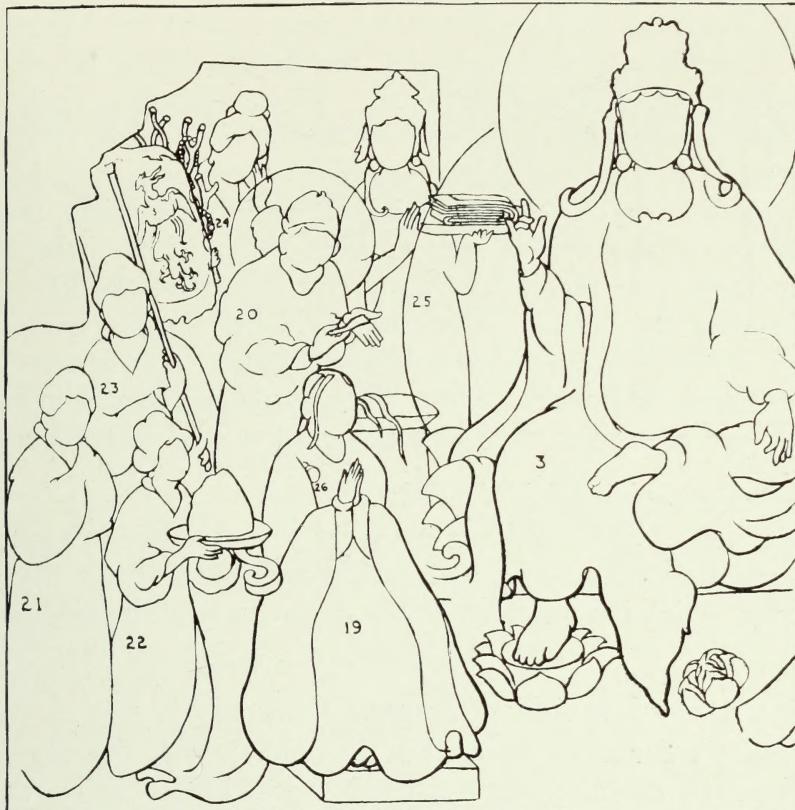
This female is less pretentiously dressed, and so would be of lower rank than the latter. The phoenix is the emblem of the Empress, as the dragon is the emblem of the Emperor.

#### 24. *Attendant carrying coral-tree and rosary*

The *ūrṇā* in her forehead is a later addition and should not be there. The rosary is entwined in the branches of the coral-tree, and is probably the usual Buddhist rosary of 108 beads. Coral offerings



FIG. 13.—Left Hand Group: The Tonsuring of Empress Hu.



## LEFT HAND GROUP

- 19 Empress Hu of the Wei Dynasty. Early 6th Century
- 20. Celestial Being acting as Barber
- 21. Attendant
- 22. Attendant holding Empress' head-dress
- 23. Attendant carrying Phoenix banner
- 24. Attendant carrying Coral-tree and Rosary
- 25. Attendant holding folded towels
- 26. Apsara cherub in folds of Empress' robe

FIG. 14.—Key to the Tonsuring of Empress Hu.

are depicted in the 8th century banners and frescoes found in Tun-huang, and are common in Buddhist paintings.

The Naga-tree or sacred coral has reference to the "Treasures of the Nagas" won by Vaiśravana, the Regent of the North, and presented as an offering to Buddha. Another Regent, Virūpāksa, who presides over the West, and the season of Autumn, is King of the Nagas. It is quite probable that this attendant carrying the Naga-tree is a female depiction of the Regent of the West, and the companion to the attendant described in No. 21 above, who might well be the female representation of the Regent of the East, who presides over the Spring. The two would be in apposition to the Regents of the North and South in the opposite tonsure scene, and thus complete the Four Regents. They would be depicted in female form in this case, since the whole scene is confined to females.

#### 25. Attendant holding folded towels

This figure also should not carry the *ūrṇā* in her forehead, this being probably a later addition. The towels are folded and placed on a tray, which is supported in the left hand and steadied by the right.

#### 26. Apsara cherub in folds of Empress's robe

This is similar to the Apsaras in the central group floating in the sky above the Buddha. It is specially noted here since another of the Museum frescoes has an Empress with the same cherub in the same place on her robe. Whether it is a separate ornament, or a decoration of the border of the robe, is undetermined, but in any case it would signify some attribute of tenderness or blessing associated with the Empress.

W. C. W.

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